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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - TFG PREVIEWS OUTREACH TO ABGAL AND TO
PUNTLAND; DESCRIBES SUPPORT TO AHLU SUNNAH WAL JAMA'A

Classified By: Somalia Unit Counselor Bob Patterson for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The TFG Prime Minister, Somalia's Envoy to Kenya Ambassador Nur "Americo," and the TFG Minister for Women and Family Affairs Fauziya Mohammed Sheikh shared their impressions of the functioning of the Transitional Federal Government as a result of their recent interactions in Mogadishu. Ambassador "Americo" and the Minister both insisted that President Sharif had fully recovered from setbacks on the Mogadishu battlefield as well as from the June 18 assassination of key Minister of National Security Omar Hashi. Sharif was now determined to reach out to the Abgal, who to all appearances have not supported him to date in Mogadishu. He was also perhaps ready to make some Cabinet changes. According to the Prime Minister, the TFG was providing significant aid to Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a (ASWJ) in the central regions, including a July 31 charter flight delivery of ammunition and weapons. The Prime Minister seemed reluctant to meet with Puntland President "Farooole," as President Sharif has been urging him to. End summary.

Rumored Abgal Outreach

¶2. (C) Somalia's Envoy to Kenya Mohammed Ali Nur "Americo" told Somalia Unit immediately after his return to Nairobi from Mogadishu on July 28 that President Sharif was finally determined to reach out to his own Abgal clan after months of ignoring complaints that they were not adequately represented in the TFG --where the President is the only Abgal. Sharif's neglect seemed to have contributed to the apparent failure of the Abgal to fight for the TFG during al-Shabaab's takeover of the Mogadishu Abgal neighborhoods of Medina, Karaan, and Abdi Aziz.

¶3. (C) During "Americo's" visit to Mogadishu, Sharif, for the first time according to "Americo," was willing to discuss his problems with the Abgal. "Americo" found Sharif to be "very talkative," which he ascribed in part to the absence from Mogadishu of Deputy Prime Minister and Sharif confidante Sharif Hassan. "Americo" (himself an Abgal) arranged a lunch for Sharif in Mogadishu with a prominent Abgal elder, and had plans to host a larger lunch in Nairobi for influential Kenya-based clan members. On July 31, "Americo" reported that the TFG had decided to appoint three new Abgal government officials in an effort to build loyalty among members of the clan. The rumored appointees were:

-- Hassan Sheikh (Hawiye/Abgal/Wa'esli) would head a newly-created Ministry of Finance;

-- Ambassador Isse Dereh (Hawiye/Abgal/Wabudhan/Daud) would receive a high-ranking TFG position to be determined;

-- Dr. Osman Duffleh (Hawiye/Abgal/Isse) would become the Minister of State for Health.

(Note: There seems to be a sound tactical logic to the inclusion of these three sub-clans. Hassan Sheikh hails from the same sub-clan as former TFG Prime Minister Gedi and rumored Hassan Dahir Aweys financier Mahmoud Omar Adani. Warlord Musa Sude Yalahow, whose militia has backed the TFG in Mogadishu, is from the Wabudhan, while Duffleh and Dereh are influential figures in their own right.)

14. (C) There was also talk, "Americo" said, of appointing an Abgal General to the TFG security forces, but some worried that the sudden appearance of so many Abgal in the TFG would spark a backlash. (Note: none of the para 3 appointments have been announced to date.) "Americo" believed that Sharif's ICU background meant that he remained skeptical of clan politics, but that he now understood that he must build clan support if the TFG was to survive.

15. (C) Minister for Women and Family Affairs Fauziya Mohammed Sheikh (Digil & Mirifle/Elay), who had recently left Mogadishu, complained about President Sharif's isolation, even from members of his own government. "Only the Islamists" and the Prime Minister see him, she said. (Note: by "Islamists," Fauziya likely meant ARS members of the TFG.) She had not met Sheikh Sharif since the TFG went to Mogadishu, and she worried that the TFG was being "held hostage by the Hawiye." As expected, she backed fellow clan member, Deputy Prime Minister Sharif Hassan who, she said had been the force behind the signing of the Price Waterhouse Cooper agreement.

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Rumored Ouster of Interior Minister,
Minister of Information. Ouster of
Intelligence Chief Mohammed Sheikh

16. (C) Although rumors of an impending Cabinet re-shuffle abound, the Prime Minister, Ambassador "Americo," and Minister Sheikh did not believe that sweeping changes were in the cards. "Americo" said that President Sharif had told him, however, that he intended to remove Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdiqadir Ali Omar (Hawiye/Saleebaan). Sharif thought that Omar at a minimum had not been effective as Minister. (Omar was Deputy Chairman of the ICU when it ousted the warlords from Mogadishu in 2006, and it was believed that his allegedly powerful personal militia had been his ticket to the Interior Minister job. Many of his militia switched sides during their first battle with al-Shabaab and Hisbul Islam in Mogadishu, however. More recently, Omar's subordinates had been linked to the July 14 kidnapping of two French government employees in Mogadishu.)

17. (C) While "Americo" was in Mogadishu, President Sharif helped arrange the departure for Cairo of Omar's second wife and planned, in a few weeks, to have Omar follow him, "Americo" said. "Americo" did not know who might replace Omar if the plan were realized.

18. (C) In a July 31 conversation, Ambassador "Americo" reported that a decision had also been made to remove Minister of Information Farhan Ali Mohamud (Hawiye/Habr Gedr/Duduble). Slated to replace Mohamud was current Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Abdirahman Abdishakur Warsame (Hawiye/Habr Gedr/Ayer). No explanation was given for the alleged removal, but Mohamud had earlier signalled to the Somalia Unit that he was considering resigning, and Somalia Unit had little success in persuading Mohamud to return to Mogadishu in order to work with the two USG-hired consultants currently in place there. "Americo" believed that Mohamud might be offered another position in the TFG.

¶9. (C) Mohamud's replacement with Warsame, if it occurs, would have the effect of removing a prominent member of the original TFG that merged with the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia/Djibouti (ARS) wing at the end of ¶2008. Mohamud rarely spoke to the press, but was seen as very effective when he did so. Some ascribed Mohamud's infrequent contacts with the media to his Duduble clan roots, arguing that a comparatively large number of Duduble are allied with al-Shabaab, and that Mohamud did not want to cross his sub-clan. (Note: When he spoke to the press, however, Mohamud was generally harshly critical of al-Shabaab.) Warsame comes from the ARS wing of the unity government. Like Mohamud, he is a British citizen.

¶10. (C) Somalia Unit continued to push the TFG to allow Intelligence Chief Mohammed Sheikh to remain in his job, following a July 21 decision to scapegoat him for the July 14 kidnapping of two French intelligence officers in Mogadishu. On July 30, the Prime Minister told us that Sheikh would remain in the government, and Deputy Prime Minister Sharif Hassan, who was present at the meeting, said he was determined to have Sheikh re-instated. (Note: Sharif Hassan has great influence with President Sharif, is Mohammed Sheikh's patron, and is of the same major clan (Digil/Mirifle) as Mohammed Sheikh.) A subsequent conversation with Minister of National Security Abdullahi "Sanbaloshi" seemed to suggest, however, that Sheikh remained on track to become "Sanbaloshi's" deputy.

Friction with Other Ministers;
Some Tension with Prime Minister
Over Failure to Meet Puntland
President

¶11. (C) "Americo" described President Sharif as unhappy with the amount of time that TFG ministers spent away from Mogadishu. "Americo" thought that the President was somewhat disenchanted with Deputy Prime Minister Sharif Hassan, who returned to Mogadishu only August 2 after a long absence, which included a trip to Malaysia to see his family.

¶12. (C) President Sharif's relations with Prime Minister Sharmarke (Darood/Harti/Majertein/Osman Mahmoud) were also frayed, "Americo" said. The current source of friction was

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the Prime Minister's reluctance to travel to Puntland for a meeting with President "Faroole." (Note: "Americo" had met with President "Faroole" in Dubai on the weekend of July 17 in order to prepare a Presidents Sharif - "Faroole" meeting.) Minister of Posts and Telecommunications Abdirizak Osman "Jurile," (Darood/Harti/Majertein/Dashishe) who comes from a Puntland clan, like Sharmarke, told Somalia Unit that he sensed that the Prime Minister's relations with President "Faroole" had soured for some reason following their April 15 dinner that both "Faroole" and the Prime Minister told us at the time went very well.

¶13. (C) President Sharif had attempted to force the Prime Minister to travel to Puntland on the weekend of July 31, but the Prime Minister claimed that President "Faroole" would have returned from Dubai and Djibouti only the day before, and that there in any event was not enough time to prepare the meeting. When Somalia Unit saw the Prime Minister on July 30, he claimed that he would travel to Puntland before the Secretary's August 6 meeting with President Sharif, but with the Prime Minister's return to Mogadishu on August 1, we understand the meeting with "Faroole" was not likely to take place. (Further complicating the prospect of a PM - "Faroole" meeting, we understand was a recent letter from Minister of Livestock Abukar Abdi Osman to the Government of Saudi Arabia requesting that the Saudis allow the import from Somalia only of livestock shipped from the port of Mogadishu. Such a request would almost certainly complicate efforts by the TFG to improve relations with "Faroole.")

Alleged Progress in Cooperation
with Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a

¶14. (C) The Prime Minister reported July 30 that the TFG was providing concrete support for Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a (ASWJ) in the central regions. A TFG-chartered plane carrying weapons, ammunition, and medical supplies to ASWJ would fly from Mogadishu to Guriel (Galgaduud Region) on July 31, from where it was scheduled to transfer about fifteen wounded ASWJ troops to Diredawa, Ethiopia, for treatment. He also claimed that the TFG on two occasions had provided financial support to ASWJ. Noting the large number of Somalis attempting to solicit assistance for ASWJ, Sharmarke said that the TFG in the end had established direct communications with ASWJ military commanders and would provide assistance directly to them. (Note: Somalia Unit has not yet confirmed that the July 31 flight took place.)

Comment

¶15. (C) Although many of the TFG's overtures discussed above remain in the planning stage, it is heartening to detect, at last, an intention to more actively seek possible allies among clans and in neighboring regions, as well as to shore up the alliance with ASWJ. The removal of the Ministers of Interior and Information, if it occurs, still falls far short of the wholesale Cabinet re-shuffle that many believe is needed, and that President Sharif himself forecast when he made his appointments in March. Sacking the Minister of Interior would at least remove one person who has been an unequivocal negative for the struggling TFG, but much more remains to be done, and the TFG continues to move too tentatively to accomplish the enormous number of pressing tasks that urgently confront it.

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